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CIN — An Update

by

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The founding and the first year's activities of the Common Interest Network (CIN) were reported in FILS, Volume 2, number 5, October 1983, pp. 5-7. What follows is an update on Thomas Troy's report.

Professional intelligence officers have traditionally been opposed to publicizing their work — shouting their good works from the housetops. The idea of having a professional association which would bring public attention to secret work was simply not the thing to do. But Congress changed all that.

As Tom Troy wrote, "retired intelligence officers, old pros, had reacted to the near ceaseless round of accusations, investigations, revelations, and condemnations of the intelligence agencies. They had organized in defense of themselves, their careers, their craft, their agencies. At the same time, they had found natural allies — retired military, defense specialists, some academicians, public-spirited citizens — whose concern for national defense made them also supportive of a strong, effective national intelligence system."

"Out of the collaboration there came on the Washington scene, in the last decade, more than a baker's dozen of either new intelligence organizations or old organizations with a new interest in intelligence. From them came in the aggregate much talking, meeting, fund raising, and promoting of causes and projects. So much, in fact, that retired Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow of the Security and Intelligence Fund (now the Security and Intelligence Foundation) was laughingly moved to complain, 'There are too damned many people barking up the same tree. There's need for some coordination.' "

There had been some suggestion of a super-organization, to which all others could belong, which would act as a coordinating body for their efforts. Some organizations talked of combining, but as is normally the case, the question of which organization would be subsumed brought all these efforts to naught.

At the October 1981 convention of the National Military Intelligence Association (NMIA) at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., leaders of four professional intelligence groups discussed the profession, and particularly the role of their organizations. In addition to NMIA, the National

Intelligence Study Center (NISC), Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO), and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) were represented. One thing they agreed on was that there could be no super-organization but that there should be some sort of informal coordinating effort to make sure they did all "bark in unison." A periodic luncheon meeting of organization leaders was suggested.

But nothing more happened until December 1982 when the AFIO board of directors voted to host a meeting of leaders of the several intelligence, and intelligence related, organizations. About fifteen persons accepted the invitation to a luncheon hosted by AFIO and its new president, retired Major General Richard X. Larkin, on March 28, 1983, at Fort McNair in Washington. NISC endorsed this AFIO initiative, agreeing to serve as an informal clearing-house for information and to help coordinate the scheduling of meetings of all organizations representing professional intelligence officers.

As Tom Troy reported, "enter CIN, the 'Common Interest Network,' an effort to bring these and many other people together, to discuss their common interests, cut out needless duplication and competition, and better promote the common cause. It is, in other words, a community of intelligence organizations, an unofficial intelligence community."

CIN is a network. It is not an organization. It has no charter, no list of officers, no by-laws, no regular obligations, and it does not contemplate acquiring any or developing into a distinct legal structural entity. It is only a loose, informal but regular gathering of representatives of the organizations with offices in the Washington area. Because of this looseness, Dr. Ray S. Cline, a CIN activist as well as President of the National Intelligence Study Center, commented that a "vague term" like "Common Interest Network" seemed appropriate, especially since its acronym was bound to be pronounced as in "living-in-sin." The name has come into common usage by the network.

There are fifteen groups listed at the conclusion of this article. They fall into several sub-sets. There are those who participate in CIN and those who do not. There are those who are purely intelligence related organizations and those who have an interest in intelligence. Then there are those who are social and those who are activist. Some listed here have attended CIN meetings but decided that their interests do not fit the mold.

Those who regularly participate in CIN are the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Law and National Security, the Association of Foreign Intelligence Officers, the Conflict Analysis Group (CAP), the Hale Foundation, the National Intelligence Study Center, the Naval Intelligence Professionals (NIP, our newest addition), and the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI. Accuracy in Media is also a regular participant, although not an intelligence professional organization nor one with intelligence as a specific function.

Those who occasionally participate are the American Security Council (ASC); the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA); the

Association of Former Agents of the U.S. Secret Service (AFAUSSS); the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence, also representing the National Strategy Information Center (NSIC); National Military Intelligence Association; and the Security and Intelligence Foundation.

Again, to quote Tom Troy, "if ticked off by their abbreviated titles, the member organizations make an alphabet soup...If looked at more discriminatingly, if their differences in size, composition, charter, and activities are considered, the soup turns out to be a rich minestrone."

CIN now meets once a quarter. There is no chairman, no agenda, and each luncheon is voluntarily hosted by one of the participants. There is not even the formality of a rotating host list. At meetings, notes are compared on the activities of organizations — when they will meet, new projects, resolutions to be offered to the membership at conventions, and who will speak at meetings. Participants discuss legislation before Congress which will impact on intelligence, books and papers about intelligence, and how the press is reporting intelligence developments. While no vote is taken, from these meetings joint effort is often the result.

Tom Troy concluded his report on CIN by saying, "despite much diversity among its members, CIN hopes to achieve much unity when it comes to speaking out publicly or testifying before congressional committees on such important topics as amending the Freedom of Information Act and protecting government employees against civil damage suits arising out of the discharge of their official responsibilities. At least CIN members hope to eliminate any working at cross purposes."

"As an informal, unofficial intelligence community, CIN has no intention of being the echo of the official intelligence community or any particular agency. Whether it can become, on occasion, a loyal opposition, however, remains to be seen. In the meantime there is much time, talent, effort, and some money being spent to promote public understanding of intelligence as a first line of national defense, and CIN is getting behind it all."

May 15, 1986

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